



News for Immediate Release

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Contacts: [Don Strickland](#), Information Officer (916) 653-9515
 [Ted Thomas](#), Information Officer (916) 653-9712

DWR to Provide Lake Oroville Water for Giant Firefighting Airplane

SACRAMENTO -- The Department of Water Resources (DWR) has agreed to provide Lake Oroville water to the U. S. Forest Service (USFS), if needed, for use in Northern California firefighting efforts.

USFS will use a Martin Mars aircraft from British Columbia's Coulson Flying Tanker Company to scoop up water from Oroville or several other lakes, depending on firefighting demands. The world's largest flying boats ever used operationally, the four-engine giants have a 200-foot wingspan and a maximum capacity of 7,200 gallons of water per trip.

If the plane does use Lake Oroville, it is not expected to significantly decrease the amount of water in the reservoir (currently 1.5 million acre feet, 44 percent of the lake's capacity).

Originally, the Martin Mars flying boats were produced for the U.S. Navy and used as troop and cargo transports in the Pacific Islands during World War II.

The Coulson company was formed in 1959 by a consortium of forest companies after experiencing several catastrophic fire seasons. The new company then purchased the Navy's remaining four Martin Mars aircraft.

A Cessna 206 airplane equipped with sirens and loudspeaker will precede the flying boat on its lake runs, warning boaters to move out of the way. The Martin Mars needs a mile and a half to scoop up water and a total climb-out distance of three miles.

Last used in California at Lake Elsinore last fall, the huge flying boat also operated out of the DWR/U.S. Bureau of Reclamation San Luis reservoir some years ago.

Firefighters working more than a thousand wildfires across Northern California are bracing for weekend winds and lightning that threaten to spread the blazes, touch off new ones, and force evacuations.

As of late Thursday, More than 12,500 firefighters were battling 1,088 fires across the

north state.

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The Department of Water Resources operates and maintains the State Water Project, provides dam safety and flood control and inspection services, assists local water districts in water management and water conservation planning, and plans for future statewide water needs.

Contact the [DWR Public Affairs Office](#) for more information about DWR's water activities.